

HOMES & CONDOS

LESLIEVILLE

Condo brings open space to Carlaw

Design includes a courtyard that will be open to the public

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The area in and around Carlaw and Dundas has witnessed a fair bit of condo construction in recent years.

These projects are helping the neighbourhood transition from its industrial past into a more residential future. As far as developer Les Mallins is concerned, though, the condos have failed to give much back to the area in terms of public space and amenities.

"None of them really engage the community," says Mallins, president of Streetcar Developments. His company will be building The Carlaw, a 12-storey, 320-unit condo at the northeast corner of Carlaw Ave. and Dundas St. W.

"Unless you know someone in one of those buildings, they're just places you drive by every day but have no reason to go into. There's no retail, no public realm and no setbacks to create more open space at grade. There's really no engagement at all, which is unfortunate."



The Carlaw will have a central courtyard that will be open to the public.

It's certainly not the way Jack Layton envisioned things happening there, he notes.

Back in 2000, when Layton was the local councillor, he oversaw the development of a Carlaw/Dundas neighbourhood improvement plan that called for developers of new buildings to help with streetscape enhancements and the creation of "significant public space for the

community." "But nothing ever happened," Mallins says. "(Developers) built what they wanted and now there is no new community space, no new space for people to hang out in. All there is a bunch of buildings and nothing to show for it."

Mallins believes his company's new condo project will help to change that.

The Carlaw will have nearly 11,000 square feet of community space at ground level, including a centre courtyard that will be open to the public and an expansive multi-purpose venue that can be rented out for events such as farmers markets, fashion shows and film festivals (or broken up to create more intimate areas for smaller functions).

"The building will have a purpose,

DETAILS

Location: 345 Carlaw Ave.
Developers: Streetcar Development and Dundee Realty
Architect: TACT Architecture
Size: 12 storeys
Units: 320, from 420 sq. ft. to 1,300 sq. ft.
Prices: From the low \$200,000s
On sale: November 2011
Information: info@thecarlaw.ca, 416-690-8588, www.thecarlaw.ca

and that's to create an anchor for this street," Mallins says.

The Carlaw's event space will be surrounded by glass walls, enabling passersby to see all the way through to the condo's courtyard. Some of the glass panels will be fully retractable and able to be opened to incorporate the streetscaping and wide sidewalks, giving The Carlaw's ground floor space the feel of an open-air market.

"We've designed the glazing and the hard landscaping treatments to coordinate with the floor finishing so that the doors open wide and you don't have to stick to a sidewalk on a summer day — you can cross right through," explains Mallins. The condo's lobby will be connected to this venue space.

Units at The Carlaw will range from 420-square-foot studios to 1,000-square-foot two-bedroom-plus-den suites. There will also be about 20 stacked townhouses on the east side of the building that will average around 1,300 square feet; the townhomes will have live-work spaces at the ground level.

Suite interior details include pre-finished engineered hardwood flooring, stone countertops and sliding glass doors.

Prices start in the low \$200,000s; the top end price has not been finalized yet. The project goes on sale to the public in early November.

The Carlaw's amenities include a 3,000-square-foot fitness centre, two guest suites and an 11th-floor rooftop terrace and lounge with cabanas and barbecues. There will also be a bistro-style area with flat screen TVs.

The building will have red-brown brick cladding on its northern and eastern sides, an architectural nod to Carlaw's warehouse history. A glass curtain wall will run along Dundas and carry through the tallest portion of the condo at the intersection and continue up Carlaw.

"The building is not only paying homage to the area's warehouse nature, it's also forward-looking," explains Prishram Jain, a principal with TACT Architecture, who designed the building.

"That expanse of curtain wall is really like a portal looking toward the west to downtown — it's reflecting downtown."

Being an infill project, The Carlaw will butt up against existing residential areas on its north and east sides. So Jain was challenged to design a building that accommodated the density required to make the development financially viable while minimizing the impact on the surrounding residences.

This has been aided in part by Streetcar's decision to preserve a three-storey office building at 349 Carlaw that sits adjacent to a block of rowhouses and is currently occupied. "We looked at it and said this is a good office building; it's got good value and it acts as a natural buffer, so let's just leave it alone," Mallins says.

The Carlaw's townhouses will be located along the east side of the property. The homes will overlook the condo's courtyard on one side and face a block of existing townhouses on the other side, with a laneway in between.

"This creates the best urban condition," Jain says, "because there isn't an issue of overlook or shadowing of those existing townhouses."

In light of those design decisions, The Carlaw's density has been pushed to the building's northwest corner, at the intersection of Carlaw and Dundas.

It will create an architectural focal point — this being the tallest portion of the building — and work to reinforce Streetcar's goal of having The Carlaw serve as a hub for the community.

"We thought if something is trying to act as an anchor, then let's design it in such a way that it's going to invite people to the doorstep and draw people inside," Mallins says. "The building is going to be bold and make a real statement."

He also thinks The Carlaw will change the way the community develops going forward, helping to right past wrongs and do Jack Layton proud.

"It will set a new tone for public realm at this end point of Carlaw and hopefully others will follow suit," says Mallins. "If we do this right, then when other developers come in with applications they're going to be forced into doing the same."



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